

# **The emotional geographies of teaching in a language teacher professional community**

Yongcan Liu

*Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK*

## **Postal Address**

Faculty of Education

University of Cambridge

184 Hills Road

Cambridge CB2 8PQ

England

Tele: 01223767692

E-mail: yl258@cam.ac.uk

## **Bio Statement**

Yongcan Liu is a University Lecturer and coordinator of the MPhil/MEd in Research in Second Language Education programme at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. He is also founding convener of Cambridge Research in Community Language Education Network. His current research interests lie in sociocultural theory and second language acquisition, community/heritage language education, and language teacher development.

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## **Abstract**

The paper reports on an in-depth narrative case study of an immigrant background English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher's emotional experience in a teacher professional community in England. The data are derived from the teacher's 'emotion diaries' and six interviews during the three-month period when she taught on a pre-sessional English programme at an English university. The data were analysed with Andy Hargreaves's emotional geography framework which focuses on the physical, moral, sociocultural, professional and political aspects of schooling. Through five stories that recount her experience in different emotional geographies, the paper demonstrates that the teacher had understandings and misunderstandings of different aspects of schooling, which gave rise to various emotions, both positive and negative. In order to survive, she also needed to adopt a wide range of strategies to manage her emotions. The study has implications for both teachers and administrators by stressing the need to engage in emotional understanding of each other's work.

**Keywords:** Teacher emotion, emotional geography, community of practice, teacher learning, language teacher development

## **Introduction**

Teaching used to be an isolated activity in the classroom, but increasingly teachers find themselves engaging in collaborative work to confront new challenges in the workplace. Underpinning this professional community model is the ideology that professional communities can provide a generative means for teachers to develop new knowledge and identities for professional development (Little and McLaughlin 1993). Yet, Little (2003, 921) warns that there has been an 'optimistic premise': the focus of much research tends to be placed on the positive characteristics of professional communities, while power relationship and emotionality in practice are largely neglected (see also Barton and Tusting 2005; Fuller 2007). Indeed, teacher professional communities are hardly neutral places. The proximity of social relationships between the members of the community can cause 'understandings and misunderstandings' of different aspects of schooling (Hargreaves, 2005: 969). These understandings and misunderstandings will in turn give rise to different emotions, both positive and negative, and constitute what Hargreaves calls the 'emotional geographies' of teaching (Hargreaves 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2005). Based on Hargreaves's emotional geography framework, the paper reports on an in-depth narrative case study of an immigrant background ESL teacher's (Wen, pseudonym) emotional experience in a teacher professional community in England. In particular, two questions are addressed in the paper:

- (1) What emotional understandings/misunderstandings of teaching can be revealed in the narratives of the ESL teacher's experience in the professional community?
- (2) How does the teacher cope with the emotional challenges arising from these understandings/misunderstandings?

The findings have significant implications for immigrant background teachers as they point to the importance of understanding the 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 1979, 551) of the workplace communities. They also provide administrators with useful evidence of the need to develop 'emotional understanding' (Denzin 1984, 1) of immigrant background teachers' work and to support them to effectively manage their emotions in practice.

### **Teacher emotion**

The research on emotionality in learning has a long history, while the research on emotionality in teaching has long been neglected (Zembylas, 2007b). In the past fifteen years since Nias's (1996) seminal work, increasing attention has been given to the role of emotion in teachers' professional practice (Day and Lee 2011; Denzin 1984; Hargreaves 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Nias, 1996; Schutz and Zembylas, 2011; Zembylas 2002, 2005, 2007a, 2010). A review of this body of work has revealed some critical issues which frame the theoretical and methodological approaches in the paper.

First, teacher emotion research is mainly conducted in subject areas such as science (Zembylas, 2002), mathematics (Hodgen and Askew, 2011), and physical education (Dowling, 2008), while research focusing specifically on language teachers is limited and often subsumed under the domain of language teacher anxiety. An exception is Cowie's (2011) study on experienced EFL expat teachers' emotions in Japan which makes explicit use of the term 'teacher emotion'. The finding of his research is not very different from that reported in the general literature on teacher emotion, which acknowledges the essential role of emotion in teaching. Cowie, however, rightly points out that the importance of emotion may be especially prominent for language teachers living in a foreign country, because they encounter various emotional challenges as a result of change in their work environment. The number of immigrant background language teachers has continued to rise in recent years as a result of transnational migration. The research on this particular group of teachers is extremely limited, let alone research on their emotions. More research is thus needed to reconceptualise language teaching as an emotional enterprise, which is the primary premise of this paper.

Second, teacher emotion research is a diverse field, but there is a lack of theorisation of the complexity of the concept. Teachers can display a variety of emotions, ranging from positive emotions and negative emotions to mixed emotions (Bullough Jr. 2011; Hargreaves 2000; Lee and Yin 2011; van Veen et al. 2005). They can be shaped and reshaped by different social, cultural and political influences (Turner et al. 2011; Zembylas 2010), and impact on teachers' well-being and vulnerability. Despite its complexity, teacher emotion has been traditionally studied as a distinct psychological construct. In the past few years, however,

there have been an increasing number of studies that view teacher emotion as a social concept. They look specifically at the relationship of emotion with identity (van Veen and Lasky, 2005), knowledge (Zembylas, 2007a), age (Hargreaves 2000, 2005), race (Hargreaves 2001b; Winograd 2011), and gender (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2011; Dowling 2008). Such a theoretical positioning is particularly useful for theorisation of the complexity of teacher emotion and aligns well with the main focus of the paper on teacher professional development.

Finally, a major criticism of teacher emotion research, as Zembylas (2007b) points out, is that there is a lack of explicit discussion of the epistemological stance in research. Zembylas identifies three epistemological approaches. The first approach, which takes a psychological perspective, reduces emotions to internal characteristics of physical responses or individuals' cognitive appraisal of contexts (Chang and Davis 2011; van Veen et al. 2005). The second approach, which Zembylas (2007b) refers to as the sociocultural approach, sees teachers' emotions as social constructions that arise in interaction with different people (Hargreaves 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Kelchtermans 2005; Rosiek and Beghetto 2011; Zembylas 2002, 2004). In a series of recent articles, Zembylas (2003, 2004, 2005) proposes a critical/poststructuralist perspective, which sees emotion as 'embodied, enacted and performed' (Zembylas 2005, 67). This study adopts the sociocultural approach. It draws upon Andy Hargreaves's concept of emotional geography to examine one individual teacher's social construction of emotions within a teacher professional community. Within this theoretical framework, teacher emotion is theorised as 'a part of a dynamic, continuously fluctuating system of meaningful experiences' (Zembylas 2007b, 61).

## **Emotional geography**

Hargreaves (2005, 969) notes:

Emotional understanding and misunderstanding in teaching result from what I term emotional geographies. These consist of the spatial experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and colour the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other.

He proposes five emotional geographies (see Hargreaves 2001a, 508-509), which serve as the conceptual as well as analytical tool for the study (see also Hargreaves 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2005).

Physical geography refers to the closeness and/or distance created by time and space. Teaching is a busy job, with little time for teachers to collaborate. A learning community provides time and space for this to happen and creates an opportunity for 'emotional understanding' of each other's work (Denzin 1984, 1). Lack of this opportunity is likely to cause misunderstanding of different aspects of schooling. For immigrant background teachers, collegiality is particularly important, as it provides them with a space to negotiate the differences in understanding teaching, learning and leadership in the workplace.

Moral geography refers to the closeness and/or distance created by different purposes and senses of accomplishment in professional practice. Coming from a different social and educational system, immigrant background teachers usually have a different set of moral standards. Teaching in a new workplace implies that they need to deconstruct their existing epistemological beliefs in order to understand the new moral legitimacy of practice. During this process, various emotions such as guilt, shame and self-doubt could emerge, which require constant emotional work and management (Zembylas, 2007a).

Sociocultural geography refers to the closeness and/or distance created by the differences of gender, race, ethnicity, language and culture. Immigrant background teachers have very distinct characteristics from the majority of their counterparts in the community. They come from a different country, speak a different language as their mother tongue, have different cultural values and might even look very different. The distinctiveness can easily be magnified in their interaction with students, teachers, administrators and parents, and can produce different emotional connections or disconnections.

Professional geography refers to the closeness and/or distance created by different understandings of the norms of professionalism and professional practice. Different cultures have different cultures of teaching and learning, and professional standards are understood in different ways. Good practice in one educational system might be considered as unnecessary, inappropriate and sometimes dangerous in another. For immigrant background teachers, it is this professional closeness and/or distance that impinges on their feeling of professional legitimacy and appropriateness, and consequently gives rise to various emotions, such as anxiety, stress and frustration.

Political geography refers to the closeness and/or distance created by different understandings of power. Professional communities are premised on a power structure that determines the order of interaction and practice. The multiple challenges of being an immigrant background teacher as well as a new member of the community entail a need to identify one's own as well as others' roles and statuses and develop a nuanced understanding of the 'feeling rules' (Hochschild, 1979, 551). Misunderstanding or breaking these rules could lead to various negative emotions such as guilt, shame and embarrassment, from self and others.

### **Narrative inquiry of teacher emotion**

A wide range of methods have been used in research on teacher emotion. These include more quantitative methods such as survey (Frenzel et al. 2011), experimental research (Chang and Davis 2011); more qualitative methods such as interview-based research (Hargreaves 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2005), case study (Hodgen and Askew 2011; Schutz et al. 2011; van Veen et al. 2005), narrative research (Mayer 2011; Noddings 2011), ethnography (Zembylas 2003; Zembylas 2005); and mixed methods (Lee and Yin 2011). The variety of research approaches has generated a repertoire of ideas which inform the narrative case study adopted in this study.

Narrative inquiry has been increasingly used as a research strategy to understand human experience in recent years, echoing a ‘narrative turn’ in humanities and social sciences (Reissman 2008, 14). Narrative inquiry is interested in the meaning and experience revealed in stories (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). In education, this method is closely related to Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995, 2000) seminal work on curricular reform in Canada. Drawing on Bruner’s (1987) notion of ‘narrative knowing’, they argue that ‘narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience’ (Connelly and Clandinin 2006, 477).

There are two dimensions to the narrative approach in the study. The first dimension is the critical events analysis (Webster and Mertova 2007). Critical events are described as ‘highly charged moments and episodes that have enormous consequences for personal change and development’ (Woods 1993, 356). This approach is entirely compatible with a study on immigrant background language teachers who usually experience significant changes in their work and life, and as a consequence, are more likely to experience a variety of emotions. What counts as a critical event varies from person to person. In this study, we are particularly interested in the incidents that cause different emotional feelings, such as joy, guilt, frustration, embarrassment, and so on. The second dimension is a single case analysis (Liu and Xu 2011, 2013; Tsui 2007), which involves a detailed investigation of an individual. Indeed, a single case study cannot lead to generalisation across all teachers. Nevertheless, a nuanced understanding of one teacher and the critical events that happen to her will generate insights that are relevant to other similar educational and transnational contexts. Moreover, a single case study can also contribute to ‘the continuous refinement and development of a fully developed theory’ (Dooley 2002, 351), which in this instance entails an attempt to contribute to the advancement of the Community of Practice theory by addressing the emotionality in practice.

## **The study**

The subject of the study is an immigrant background ESL teacher called Wen (pseudonym), who was originally from China and came to the UK to study for her master’s degree in English Language Teaching. Prior to this, she had had eight years of teaching experience in a university in China. After completing her master’s degree, she was offered a three-month contract to teach on the pre-session programme at the language centre of an English university. The language centre had eight permanent teaching staff members, but during the summer, extra teachers were recruited to teach on the oversubscribed pre-session programmes. The majority of these part-time tutors were white native speakers of English, but occasionally, some non-native speaking ESL teachers were also employed. Wen was one of those tutors brought in to teach on a pre-session programme on which a number of students from Asia were enrolled. Wen and I met at a research conference. When she told me how excited she was about her new job, I understood very well her feelings and was genuinely pleased for her. As a teacher with an immigrant background myself, I shared her emotions of joy, excitement and anxiety. This emotional connection gradually turned into

rappport and empathy in our research partnership later on which enabled me to engage in emotional understanding of her professional work. Her stories sometimes brought back memories of my own emotions of being a newly recruited non-native language teacher in the UK. Indeed, narrative inquiry reflects the ‘living and telling, reliving and retelling’ of many stories, both hers and mine (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 20).

The ‘fieldwork’, which lasted 12 weeks and covered the period of the pre-sessional programme, generated two core sets of data. The first set comprised 68 entries of Wen’s ‘emotion diary’ (Zembylas 2007b, 359). Before we met, Wen had already planned to record her experience in the UK through diaries and thus welcomed an opportunity to do it in a more structured way. I encouraged her to continue what she planned to do, but requested her to pay special attention to her emotional experience. The second set of data was derived from six bi-weekly interviews, each lasting 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews usually took place on a Friday afternoon in a mutually convenient place and were recorded with two digital recording pens. All interviews were conducted in Chinese, as Wen felt more comfortable to discuss the emotional issues in her native language, which is also my mother tongue as a researcher.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The data collection and analysis processes were interwoven with each other and comprised six two-week ‘restorying cycles’ (see also Liu and Xu 2013, 183). Each restorying cycle started with analysis of Wen’s emotion diaries collected on a regular basis. As soon as I received the diaries, I started to identify the narratives in the diaries and reorganised them in the form of a summary. The mini stories were then coded with Hargreaves’s emotional geography framework, each labelled with one of the five categories – physical, moral, sociocultural, professional and political geographies. Based on these stories, I developed the protocols for the follow-up interviews.

The interviews, which usually took place at the end of the second week of the restorying cycle, were conducted in a casual manner and followed the procedures of ‘narrative interviewing’ (Reissman, 2008). I usually started by asking Wen some questions about her general experience during the two weeks. This was followed by some specific questions requesting her to elaborate on the stories identified in her diaries. Wen’s stories sometimes brought back my own memories and emotions, which ran into the sharing of my own experiences. The interviews were first transcribed verbatim and the narratives were identified and reorganised into mini stories in the form of a summary, following the same procedures as in the analysis of diaries. The stories were also coded with the emotional geography framework and then paired up with those derived from the diaries. For example, Wen recounted her emotional experience of collaboration with colleagues in her diary, which was coded as a critical incident under the category of physical geography. In the follow-up interview, she retold the story and elaborated on her emotional experience with further details. This retold story was coded with the same category of emotional geography and thus provided further information for triangulation of evidence. The iterative process was repeated

in each of the six restorying cycles which finally distilled the five stories presented below, one each from the five geographies.

## **Findings**

### ***Physical geography: 'I feel like I am on my own.'***

Wen was very excited about embarking on a new teaching journey in a foreign country when the course was about to start. She also looked forward to working closely with her colleagues whom she had yet to meet. At the induction for newcomers, she was introduced to four colleagues who were going to teach in the same cohort as her. The head of the department encouraged them to work collaboratively and to share teaching materials. The team had a meeting after the induction and agreed that they should each prepare one part of the course. They also agreed to share prepared worksheets and their own teaching notes on a weekly basis. Wen was in charge of the reading part. She efficiently completed her own tasks assigned the very next day and circulated the materials to her new colleagues. For the rest of the week, she patiently waited for colleagues' feedback and their teaching materials, but did not hear from them at all. As Sunday drew near, Wen started to panic and wrote in her diary that she was very stressed, not knowing what her colleagues thought of her work and whether she should contact them for their materials. Wen was very confused, and was unsure what would be the appropriate thing to do:

We were asked to share materials but it seems that I am the only person who has done this so far. Shall I contact them again? Would it be too pushy to do so? Would they be happy if I use my own materials? Would this lead to the collapse of trust and working relationship with my colleagues? But I cannot wait any longer but start to prepare for those sessions.

Wen managed to get all the materials sorted by herself, and finally received two colleagues' materials relatively late on the eve of Sunday. She was not sure whether she should use those materials since there was very little time to familiarise herself with them. After this and for the next several weeks, she was very confused about the workplace culture, and more importantly, how collaboration was done within the community. Also, she was not sure whether she should continue to circulate her own materials. As time passed, however, she gradually worked out the 'rule' and realised that collaboration in lesson preparation was not compulsory. In the interview, she compared the culture of collaboration in the two workplaces where she had worked:

In China, certainly in the department where I used to work, collaboration was compulsory and there was allocated time for this. All teachers teaching the same module were required to attend a group meeting on a weekly basis. Teachers would take turns to produce a joint teaching plan and everybody had to follow the plan to ensure that all classes had the same amount of input. While here, teachers have a lot of autonomy to choose materials and collaboration is

encouraged and appreciated but not made compulsory. Colleagues seem to work quite independently.

Wen felt that meetings with her teaching peers were important for her because the physical proximity and interaction could provide her with the confidence to talk about her work and gave her the insights into her colleagues' thinking, as well as the working culture within the institution. It also provided her with the time and space to understand better the practices of the community. Nevertheless, she also realised that many colleagues seemed to prefer to work independently of each other due to personal preferences and due to the lack of time to meet regularly. Collaboration thus arose out of an individual's preference rather than as a collective need. She hoped for opportunities to work collectively on the course materials. However, she did not get to work much with others. She went about her own work independently without having much professional interaction with her peers. In her own words, 'I feel like I am on my own'.

***Moral geography: 'I don't think it is fair for anybody.'***

Wen won many teaching awards when she was in China and always aimed for the highest moral and professional standards in her teaching. One thing which she had constantly struggled with in her new job was to ensure fairness for all students. She recalled an incident that happened towards the end of the course. In week ten, each student was allocated a thirty-minute one-to-one tutorial to discuss his or her final project. The students were expected to complete the second draft of project essay based on their teachers' feedback and hand it in two days before the final tutorial. However, one of the students failed to do so. Wen was shocked by the poor quality of the writing when she saw the essay at the tutorial. She expressed her concern and the student asked for extra tutorials as well as extension. Wen found herself in a dilemma: if she refused, the student might fail the project or even the whole course; if she agreed, it would be unfair for other students as the thesis counted as assessed work and everyone was required to follow the same schedule and procedure. Finally, Wen declined the student's request but felt very guilty about this and wrote in her diary:

From my heart, I wish I had given her more support. I cannot turn a blind eye to a student who is struggling. From my head, I must treat everyone equally as I was told to do so during the staff meeting ... sometimes, I felt I was being torn by two minds and it's just too hard for me. I don't know how to balance them and really hope that somebody can help me out.

When I interviewed her the following week, Wen was still very worried about the student and could not decide whether she should contact the student to see how she got on with her essay. In the interview, she further explained her feeling at that time:

I know I've probably done the right thing. This is a part of the assessment and each student should be given the same amount of attention as well as time. But I still feel bad about not being able to offer her some extra assistance. I know

being fair is important as people around me have kept talking about it. But as a Chinese myself, I don't think I would be understood by students from my own country who might think I was very 'cold-blooded'. This made me feel really bad.

I asked Wen whether she had any favourite student. She smiled and said everybody had. However, she kept reminding herself that she should treat everybody the same and did not allow favouritism. To Wen, ensuring fairness and equality was a new issue for her to deal with in her new teaching assignment. However, she was pleased that she had learnt to deal with something which was a very important aspect of her professional work.

***Sociocultural geography: 'I am not even a native speaker. What do they think of me then?'***

One of the biggest challenges in teaching for Wen was her being a non-native speaker of English. She was fluent in English with an IELTS<sup>1</sup> score of 8.5. However, she had a lot of self-doubt about her language ability and mocked herself as 'a teacher with linguistic deficit'. She was also aware that many students had expected to be taught by local English teachers. This expectation placed a lot of pressure on her. She recalled a story that happened shortly after she started the job. It was a lesson on vocabulary and the main purpose was to teach the students some new words related to environment. She prepared a long list of vocabulary, hoping that it would cover all the words that the students would want to know. Half way through the lesson, however, a student asked a question, 'Miss, is there any other paraphrase for "dispose?"' Wen did not come up with an immediate answer and told the class that she would consult the dictionary first. In her diary, Wen wrote about her embarrassment:

I was very frustrated not being able to answer that question, which I think my English colleagues could easily do so. I would not forget the disappointment on their faces and doubt in their eyes. I don't remember how I survived the rest of the lesson. It was so embarrassing and I just wanted to find a place to hide.

In the interview, Wen talked a lot about students' expectations of their lecturers. She knew that many students had a stereotypical image of an English language teacher in their mind – white, senior, a native speaker with a perfect English accent. She did not blame the students, but herself for not being able to give them the most 'authentic' English experience. She also admitted that it could be very worrying, more so after hearing stereotypical comment about the 'natives' and 'non-natives':

I used to be very confident about my teaching and language ability, but I am less so now. The other day a friend told me that some students in the business school refused to be taught by a native English teacher with an ethnic minority

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<sup>1</sup> IELTS: International English Language Test System is an international standardized English language test for non-native speakers of English, which is commonly used as the language proficiency test for university course admission in the English-speaking world. The band level ranges from 0 (no attempt) to 9 (expert user).

background, merely because of her accent. I was completely horrified by that. I am not even a native speaker of English. What do they think of me then?

In a light-hearted manner, Wen told me that she had tried hard to get rid of her 'foreignness'. She constantly monitored her use of language in order to avoid making mistakes. In addition to this, she also attempted to put on an English accent that she hoped would sound more native. She knew that she would never become a native speaker of English, but she was trying every possible means to meet the needs and expectations of her students.

***Professional geography: 'I'd better keep a distance from them.'***

When the students became more familiar with Wen, they were keen to spend some time with her after class. Wen was sometimes seen as a 'big sister', which caused her great concern. She understood that she should not be too close to her students and had kept a professional distance from them. She referred to an earlier incident involving an invitation that she received from her students. Three weeks into the programme, several Chinese students came up to her after class and invited her to dinner. They wanted to consult her on some learning issues/difficulties they had, but preferred to discuss them in a casual way. Wen gave them some advice on the spot, but declined their invitation. A student teased her, saying that she did not 'give them face'. In her diary, Wen talked about her dilemma:

I felt bad about declining their genuine invitation. I am still learning how to keep a professional relationship with the students, which I am not used to. In China, teachers and students have a very close personal relationship like friends. As the Chinese saying goes: 'as a teacher and as a friend'. A good teacher is usually defined by a good relationship with the students. Students respect teachers like their parents and teachers protect their students like their children. I was not sure whether having dinner with my current students was appropriate or not, so the safest choice was to say 'no'.

In the interview, I asked Wen to elaborate on the relationship between teachers and students in the UK. She likened this relationship to a contractual professional relationship, with a clear boundary between the personal and the professional. She preferred a closer relationship but admitted that she would rather act professionally. She constantly redrew the boundary between the personal and the professional, and was always caught in the dilemmas of deciding on the appropriate professional practice and stance that she should adopt:

It is very difficult to tell what is professionally acceptable. On the one hand, I do not want to give the students an impression that I am cold and arrogant. I have never thought that teaching is a profession like a lawyer. To me teaching is about passing on the knowledge and virtues to the students, which can be facilitated by a close personal relationship. But, on the other hand, I realise that I'd better keep a distance from them and fit in with the teaching and learning culture here.

Some students teased her on being so serious in her teaching demeanour and wondered whether she had disliked them. Wen was embarrassed by these questions, but she had to remind herself not to cross the line. To make things easier, Wen also decided to cut off all of what she called ‘unnecessary interactions’. She did not even attend the social activities organised by the language centre, as she did not want to create opportunities for her to be approached as a ‘big sister’, which might lead to anything seen as personal and unprofessional.

***Political geography: ‘They have the final say.’***

Wen had a lot of experience of leading group discussions, chairing meetings and courses, when she was in China. Within the new teaching community, however, she chose to be a listener. The most outspoken and influential members in the community, according to Wen, comprised the several permanent staff members who had taught on the programme for a number of years. In a staff meeting during mid-term, an issue was raised regarding the use of first language (L1) in the classroom. The discussion was mainly dominated by the core group, who strongly believed that only English should be used in the classroom and that all other languages should be banned. When Wen was asked for her opinion, she replied that ‘it depends; sometimes it might be useful’. Immediately after saying that, Wen regretted it as her response seemed to create some unease from some colleagues who insisted that the use of L1 would result in bad language transfer. In her diary, she described her feelings at that time:

I did not expect the reaction to be so strong and I was a bit upset. Was I doing the right thing? I thought I would contribute to the discussion from a totally different perspective, as I am an ESL learner and teacher myself. But I was very sorry that some colleagues did not seem to be happy with my ‘it depends’ and insisted on the English only policy.

The awkward situation, however, was turned around by the head of the language centre, who apparently was the most experienced and senior member of the group. She had substantial experience working with international students and had chaired the pre-session programme for many years. She was quite interested in Wen’s opinion and encouraged her to elaborate on it. In the interview, Wen showed great respect for her boss, whom she thought was very open-minded and balanced the group dynamics in a subtle and delicate manner:

Kate was just superb. She did not comment on the issue straightaway, but mentioned other general classroom management issues first before coming back to the discussion on the use of L1. She said, ‘It is very interesting. Wen, would you mind saying a little bit more?’ I was very encouraged by her inclusive manner which made me feel my voice was valued. I know that they have the final say, but I really appreciated that Kate gave me a chance to finish my words which won me respect from colleagues.

Wen described this as a turning-point, which had an ‘amazing effect’ on the group dynamics. After the head’s intervention, Wen noticed that colleagues started to ask her for advice on issues about working with international students after the meeting. Throughout the second half of the programme, she felt more and more integrated into the community and was very pleased to be seen as a useful and valued member of the team.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The paper presents five stories of an immigrant background ESL teacher’s emotional experience in a teacher professional community in England. The stories focus on her experience of collaboration with colleagues, her sense of fairness in teaching, her professional relationship with students, her self-awareness as a non-native speaker of English and her experience of the power relationship in the community. The stories were analysed based on Hargreaves’s emotional geography framework which focuses on the physical, moral, sociocultural, professional and political aspects of schooling (Hargreaves 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2005). Hargreaves’s research is set within the context of curricular reforms in Canada. He argues that teachers’ professional development is not merely a cognitive and technical enterprise, but also involves social and emotional aspects of practice (see also Denzin 1984; Nias 1996; Schutz and Zembylas, 2011; Zembylas 2002, 2005, 2007a, 2010). Teaching English in a transnational context, as illustrated in the paper, also entails a social process. During this process, different emotions, both positive and negative, arose as a result of understanding and misunderstanding of different aspects of schooling. In Hargreaves’s (2000, 235) words, teaching is ‘irretrievably emotional’. This observation concurs with Cowie’s (2011) finding that the importance of emotion is especially prominent for language teachers living in a foreign country, as they are seen as different, linguistically, socially and culturally.

Every community has its own rules which are underpinned by the power structure of the community (Wenger 1998). The language centre in the study can be seen as an English Language Teaching (ELT) professional community which is typically and historically constituted by white, senior, and native speakers of English. These membership criteria also matched overseas students’ needs, expectations and imaginations of the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession. At the top of the hierarchy in the community were the permanent staff members who perfectly matched these membership criteria. As ‘old-timers’ of the community, they also set the rules for professional practice: keeping a professional distance from students, treating every student equally and fairly, and using English only in the classroom. In comparison, Wen was new, young, foreign and a non-native speaker of English who did not match any of the membership criteria. She was well aware of her status, and thus positioned herself as a ‘legitimate peripheral participant’ (Lave and Wenger 1991, 27) and ‘chose’ to be a listener. The difference between the centrality of full-time senior staff and the peripherality of part-time junior staff like Wen had thus created a power structure within the community (Wenger 1998). From a social reproduction point of view (see Collins 2009), we can argue that the institutional rules were socially, historically and politically produced by the power structure of the community and were discursively reproduced by the students through

their expressed needs, expectations and imaginations of the ELT (English Language Teaching) professionals as senior, white and native speakers of English (see also Canagarajah, 1999, 2012).

The social structure and the constitutive rules of the community have a regulative and shaping effect on teachers' emotions. In order to survive, new members need to identify, follow, and abide by the institutional rules (Zembylas 2007). Misunderstanding or breaking these rules can cause various negative emotions, from self and others. In Wen's case, misunderstanding the rule of collaboration had caused the emotions of stress and frustration. Her dilemma of keeping a professional relationship with students made her feel guilty and embarrassed. It is also clear in the last story that she broke the rule of interaction and consequently caused unease among colleagues and regret with herself. All these examples have shown that teachers can display a wide range of emotions (Zembylas, 2005), which are 'socially grounded' (Nias 1996, 294). This finding is in accordance with a number of recent sociocultural studies which theorise teacher emotion as 'a part of a dynamic, continuously fluctuating system of meaningful experiences' (Hargreaves 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Zembylas 2002, 2004).

When negative emotions occur, teachers need to engage in constant emotional work and management (Meyer 2011). In the second story, for example, Wen felt very guilty about not giving extra tutorials to the student in order to ensure fairness for all. She also constantly monitored her practice of equality in the classroom and got herself used to the morality of practice in the new professional community. As a non-native speaker of English, she was frustrated about not being able to live up to the students' expectation, so she attempted to change the way she spoke and tried to avoid mistakes in teaching. In order to observe the rule of 'professional distance', Wen decided to avoid 'unnecessary interactions' with students. In Zembylas's (2005, 936) words, Wen had actively engaged in developing 'the strategies and tactics that have taken place in various emotional practices at different moments in relation to one's teaching'. The emotional work can be conducted by self as well as through others. In the last story, Wen's comments on the use of L1 had caused negative emotions within herself as well as in her colleagues, but the intervention of the centre director successfully transformed the negative emotions into positive ones. Kelchtermans (2005, 998) notes that negative emotions can lead to teachers' 'professional vulnerability', which is intertwined with 'their identity, beliefs, values and sense of competence'. Wen's experience in the last story has shown the opposite. Her emotional work was mediated by the leadership of the administrator who made her feel included and valued, and thus created an opportunity for her continuous professional development (see Beatty, 2011).

The findings of the paper bear significant implications for teachers and administrators alike. In transnational migration contexts, being new, foreign, young and a non-native speaker of English can pose multiple challenges for immigrant background teachers like Wen. In order to survive, they need to establish close bonds with other members of the community, and create working conditions to enable 'emotional understanding' of self and others (Meyer 2011, 76). Teachers' emotions are not always enacted, expressed and communicated, however. In the first story, for example, Wen's negative emotions occurred without being

noticed; she had to work out the rule of collaboration by herself and managed her emotions independently. In the fourth story, she felt guilty about declining the students' invitation and had to manage this negative emotion through non-participation in social activities. All these examples have illustrated Hargreaves's assertion that 'teaching, learning and leading may not be solely emotional practice, but they are always irretrievably emotional in character, in a good way or a bad way, by design or by default.' (2000, 812). It is also worth noting that other teachers, particularly young teachers on initial teacher training programmes, may face similar emotional challenges in their interaction with students, colleagues, administrators and parents (see Hodgen and Askew, 2011). For successful teaching to happen, therefore, both the teachers and the administrators should recognise the importance of emotions in teaching and mutually engage in emotional understanding of each other's work. This entails that the teachers develop 'self understanding' (Kelchtermans 2005, 999) in a reflexive manner and exercise more agency in emotional work. For the administrators, it is important to be aware of the potential impact of negative affectivity on teachers' professional development. As demonstrated in the last story, favourable conditions can be created through leadership in order for the positive emotions to be 'constructed, expressed, and communicated' (Zembylas 2003, 216).

To conclude, the paper has made three theoretical contributions to our understanding of teacher learning and professional development. First, the research challenges the traditional understanding of teacher change and development as a cognitive process of acquisition of knowledge and skills, and recognises the social nature of teaching and the fundamental importance of emotion in practice (Hargreaves 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Kelchtermans 2005; Zembylas 2002, 2004). Second, previous research on communities of practice has mainly focused on the positive characteristics. The research challenges the romanticised view of Community of Practice and addresses Little's concern that collegiality in professional communities is 'conceptually amorphous' and 'ideologically sanguine' (Little 1990, 509). Indeed, working together in a professional community is never easy in any context. The main challenge lies in how to ensure that the members of the community are not contrived by a system of collegiality at the surface level. Thirdly, the paper highlights the 'relational view' of structure and agency in teacher learning and professional development (Edwards 2010). The social structure of the professional community can certainly shape and reshape teachers' emotions, but what really matters is whether the community can provide a favourable working environment to liberate the teachers and enable them to create socially just 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 1979, 551). It is hoped that through exercising more agency teachers will be able to create more emotional connections with other members of the community and transform negative affectivity into positive energy for continuous professional development.

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